

Minutes of the Tri-Town Meeting

Saturday, December 8, 2018

The meeting came to order at 2:05 pm. Suzy Enos presiding.

Present were 17 representatives from various Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford bicycle committees and organizations.

Introductions were made around the table.

Agenda Topic 1: Discussion of bikeway behavior guidelines (speed limits, E-bike policies, signage).

It was noted that there is not a lot of data that has been collected to properly inform speed limit recommendations. Speed limits would only be advisory in any case since there is no official enforcement. However, it could be good to highlight speed issues with trail users, and 15 mph seems to be a good baseline. Time-of-day obviously matters—there was an interest in allowing no limit during low use times (very early morning was noted). There are some trouble spots that might need a lower speed limit, such as the turns at Thorndike in Arlington. A point was made that it would be easier to have a speed limit if there was better on-road infrastructure for faster riders. Surveys designed to provide more data should be coordinated between the towns so that consistent interpretation is possible.

E-bikes are generally categorized as Type 1, 2, or 3, depending on maximum speed. California has developed E-bike rules, and they have been proposed as guidance for the Boston area. There was support for allowing E-Bikes that are pedal assist up to 20 mph. Only electric assist should be permitted. User behavior should be addressed with speed limit or courtesy signage. Currently, bike share stock in the Lexington–Bedford area consists of about 15% E-bikes, and this is expected to rise.

A proposed 3 foot passing rule does not seem to be reasonable for bikeways, given the limited space available on the trail. Passing distance should depend on circumstance and relative speed. There was interest in seeing this addressed via ‘courtesy’ signage, if that moves forward.

There was a general discussion of bikeway safety signage. Funding and permitting of signs is a major issue. Signs also tend to be vandalized over time. Humor helps, as evidenced by some examples used in Lexington. Community TV stations could be used to help produce safety and information videos that could be posted on YouTube.

Agenda Topic 2: Tri-town events.

The bikeway 25th anniversary celebration was generally a success. The chalk haiku project received much positive feedback. The website probably could have done a better job coordinating across town events, with more overarching messaging/organization as opposed to just town by town event lists. Arlington might have done better by focusing on fewer events given the limited organizational manpower.

Proposals for regular annual events are sought. Bedford does an annual bike-to-service. Arlington does an annual tour, including a police detail and stops every half-mile or so. It was proposed to make an effort to broaden communication lists for event announcements. There was general interest in some new activity (or cross town promotion of existing activities) but nothing called out for now.

Agenda Topic 3: Open Street Maps (OSM).

OSM is an international standard, open source, mapping tool, adaptable to any display device. It is easy to use it to create a bike infrastructure layer (bike paths, bike lanes, sharrows, etc.). It was proposed to use this as a common tool, with volunteers from each town adding local data. There are organizations that have developed software that computes bikability scores from the map. A problem is that town governments generally do not use this tool, and conversion would be difficult.

Agenda Topic 4: New since the last Tri-town meeting.

Arlington: Arlington High School is being renovated, and it is being proposed to include better access to the bikeway. A light is being proposed for the Lake Street bikeway crossing. Better bikeway access design is being proposed from the Trader Joe's. There is a new trial bus lane on Massachusetts Avenue that is being shared with bicycles. So far the bus drivers have not had any problems with this.

Bedford: There is a new placemaking project being planned for one of the more dangerous Narrow Gauge Rail Trail street crossings. The aim is to better control motor vehicle behavior by building a more park-like atmosphere around it. Construction of the bikeway extension to the Concord border is scheduled for 2022. There is an expectation that Concord will extend it further once it is complete.

Lexington: Inputs to the comprehensive bike plan are in progress. Massachusetts Avenue bike lanes are being planned. The current design does not provide enough separation from parked cars. There is an ongoing effort to have this corrected. Coordination is being established with the Lexington Police Department to obtain more comprehensive bike-related accident data.

Proposed agenda Items for the next Tri-town meeting (Lexington, spring 2019):

- (1) Further discussion of bicycle infrastructure mapping.
- (2) Inclusion of bike training in the Middle School curriculum. This would optimally impact the age group that would be transitioning to independent biking.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm.